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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2006

In Today's Papers

New Initiative from Turkey on Armenian Issue

Milliyet reports that Turkey is getting ready to take a critical step toward making changes in its Armenian policy. Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul signaled that Turkey, following its proposal to form an international commission composed of prominent historians to study Armenian allegations, has been preparing to make another very important move. Gul was quoted as saying "Turkey has been exerting sincere efforts in order to bring clarification to a historical issue. We are considering various alternatives, including judicial action." CHP member Sukru Elekdag said that the 'judicial action' mentioned by Gul was "international arbitration." Milliyet notes that the recent victory of the Democrats in the US Congress had made Ankara accelerate its steps to block the campaign of the Diaspora.

If an Election Were Held Today

Yeni Safak reports that a poll, conducted by ANAR for Yeni Safak, showed that if elections were held today only two parties, AKP and CHP would enter parliament. According to the survey, AKP would get 29%, CHP 12%, MHP 6%, DYP 5.6%, DTP 5.3%, Genc Party 3.6%, Anavatan 2.7%. The poll showed that almost half of the people have not started thinking about the Presidential election. 29.7 % said Erdogan should become President and 13.4 % preferred that he continue as PM.

Commentary on Iraq

While all papers carry stories regarding the chaotic situation in Iraq, commentators focused on the possibility of the US and UK changing their current strategy, particularly in light of the Iraqi Working Group meeting and Tony Blair's recent remarks.

In the Islamist-intellectual daily Zaman Abdulhamit Bilici offers a sarcastic "good morning" as he notes that the West may have finally woken up to the facts in the Middle East: "Interestingly enough, the responsible ones for the current swamp in Iraq are working to find a way to exit. The daily realities of Iraq provide absolutely no hope

for the future as it goes through an undeclared civil war. In this respect, the upcoming report on Iraq by the 'Iraq Working Group' is very important to watch since it will shape the process. President Bush is proud of not changing his faith and stances on the issues, but when it comes to Iraq, even he started talking about 'constantly changing tactics' in an effort to sell the fiasco to the public. The Iraq war was started before doing a proper analysis and making reasonable plans, and unfortunately Bush accepted everything offered by the neo-cons. The current picture of Iraq only proves how perfect the neo-con plan was! Not only on the Iraq issue, but also on the Middle East there seems to be some common sense emerging. Tony Blair has come to accept the reality that a settlement for the Middle East should start with the Palestinian problem. We can only say 'good morning' to this analysis. Nevertheless it is better to see reality eventually."

Sami Kohen in the mainstream Milliyet draws attention to the fact that two members of the axis of evil are now on the good list: "Iran and Syria were on the axis of evil list until a few days ago, and now they are mentioned as countries to cooperate with on Iraq. Tony Blair has already called for initiating contact with Tehran and Damascus for the sake of Iraq and the Middle East issues. The co-chairmen of the Iraq Working Group, James Baker and Lee Hamilton also suggested a change in the American strategy for Iraq and advised efforts be made to get Iran and Syria's support. It would be unrealistic to expect an immediate change in American strategy but the trend is likely to shift toward making changes in early 2007. Americans have already started brainstorming to find ways to establish dialogue with Iran and Syria. Organizing a conference for broader Middle East countries is one of the ideas circulating. This effort not only makes Syria and Iran very happy, but also paves the way for both to impose their conditions on the US. Regarding finding a settlement on Iraq, it is really questionable to what

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extend they can really be helpful. The truth is contributions from Iran and Syria are needed on the Iraq issue, which clearly indicates the helplessness of the Western powers on this issue."

Fethullah Gulen Denies Grant Allegations to Hartford Seminary
Zaman reports that Dr. Ali Bayram, representative of Turkish theologian and religious leader Fethullah Gulen, denied reports that they donated \$ 2 million to the Hartford Seminary. Bayram stressed that their sponsorship agreement with the Hartford Seminary aims to establish an Islamic Studies Position at the seminary and to support the academic projects of the students.

Turkey's Crime Rate Increased 60%
Radikal, citing Security Department reports as its source, reports that while there were 1,336 crimes committed per day in all of 2005, the number reached 2,191 within the first six months of 2006.

TV Highlights
NTV (7 A.M.)

Domestic News

- Journalist/writer Perihan Magden was acquitted of charges in two cases: one for insulting the father of the assassin of the priest in Trabzon in her articles; and the other for criticizing the delay of the announcement of a verdict in the Pinar Selek case.
- Prosecutor demands life in prison for Syrian terrorist Luai Sakka in connection with the 2003 Istanbul bombings
- Rahsan Ecevit said that the grave of Bulent Ecevit will be moved from State Cemetery to a place in Golbasi as Ecevit liked that area very much
- Greenpeace activists stage protests in front of Parliament to protest a bill for the construction of a nuclear plant

International News

- Gunmen wearing Iraqi police uniforms kidnapped as many as 150 people from the Education Ministry building in central Baghdad
- British PM Blair says Syria and Iran could be the key to reducing bloodshed in Iraq

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